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The Effect of Direct Democratic Participation on Citizens' Political Attitudes in Switzerland:

The Difference between Availability and Use

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Abstract

According to advocates of direct democracy, it is important to involve citizens more directly into the political decision making process in order to create a democratic linkage between citizens and the political system. Indeed, some studies show that citizens who live in direct democracies have higher levels of trust in political institutions and political efficacy. However, not all empirical evidence confirms this relationship. In a recent article on Switzerland it has been shown that while the availability of direct democratic rights enhances trust in political institutions, using those rights actually initiates distrust. In this paper I expand the analysis of Bauer and Fatke (2014) and test whether the different effects of the availability of direct democratic rights and the frequency of their use also hold for broader measures of trust in political institutions and political efficacy. I find that while an increased use of direct democratic measures is associated with lower levels of confidence in authorities on the cantonal level, this relationship disappears for a more comprehensive measurement of trust in political institutions.

Introduction

A legitimate, stable and well-functioning polity is based on a strong relation between citizens and the state. However, in most established democracies the mechanisms that connect citizens with the political system have fundamentally changed in the last few decades (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). Given this development, proponents of direct democracy argue that one way of sustaining and strengthening the linkage between citizens and the state is to involve citizens more directly into the political decision making process. The theory of participatory democracy provides a theoretical foundation for this argument. Political philosophers adhering to this theory assume that participation has an educative and an integrative function that connects citizens with the community (Barber, 1984; Pateman, 1970). In recent years, the attitudinal effect of direct democratic participation has attracted renewed interest in the literature. Most of this research has been conducted in countries that provide citizens with extensive mechanisms to engage directly in decision-making, notably the United States and Switzerland. Yet, the findings of those studies seem rather inconclusive and – even more striking – the results of some analyses are in sharp contrast with what participatory democrats would predict.

In one of these studies on the relationship between direct democracy and trust in cantonal authorities in Switzerland Bauer and Fatke (2014) found that while levels of trust are higher in cantons that offer extensive direct democratic rights, they are lower in cantons in which those rights are in fact frequently used by citizens. Hence, making more frequently use of direct democratic rights is found to strengthen distrust. Dyck (2009) obtained similar results in the American context, as he shows that ballot initiatives in the United States decrease trust in state governments. These studies suggest that while the *availability* of direct democratic procedures might have the effect that is envisioned in the literature, the fact that citizens actually *use* those opportunities might be an indication of distrust rather than trust. Hence they come to the conclusion that the use of direct democratic procedures might initiate political distrust.

Yet, looking closely at the indicators that were used to measure political trust in those two studies, shows that Bauer and Fatke (2014) as well as Dyck (2009) relied on a rather narrow measurement that only captures trust in authorities on the canton or the state level. While this negative relationship between such specific measures of trust and the use of direct democratic procedures is indeed conceivable, it remains to be investigated whether we also find the same effect if we use a more encompassing measurement of trust in political institutions. Using a broader operationalization of trust in political institutions seems important because it can represent "a comprehensive assessment of the political culture that is prevailing in a political system" (Hooghe, 2011, p. 270). In line with David Easton (1965; 1975), I consider trust in political institutions as an expression of support for the political system, which is not just the result of satisfaction with performance (Chanley et al. 2000; Marien & Hooghe 2011; Miller & Listhaug 1990) and hence represents a form of legitimacy (Hetherington, 1998; Zmerli & Hooghe, 2011). Consequently, from a normative point of view, a negative effect of direct democracy on trust in political institutions would be worrisome as it would endanger the functioning and the stability of the democratic system. I therefore rely on trust in political institutions more broadly defined and expand the analysis even further by including a second measure that is also directly related to the classical conceptualization of a democratic civic culture: external political efficacy, i.e. the belief that governmental institutions and public officials are responsive to the interests, need and demands of citizens. Political efficacy is of course a very distinct concept from political trust, but the entire research tradition on the civic culture stresses that it is important that citizens also see themselves as active participants in the political process. Both concepts therefore represent important political attitudes linking citizens and the state. Already in Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963) both attitudes were considered to be an essential element of a democratic civic culture.

To investigate the relationship between *having* and *using* direct democratic rights and support for the political system I rely on the models of Bauer and Fatke (2014) and extend their analysis. I do so by including other, and more comprehensive attitudinal measurements than in their original study, namely trust in political institutions and furthermore also external political efficacy. Both measures are assumed to be developed during childhood, they are expected to be relatively independent of outputs in the short run and hence comparatively stable over time (Easton, 1975; Iyengar 1980). To measure trust in political institutions and external political efficacy I draw on two different datasets from Switzerland: the Swiss Electoral Studies "Selects" and the Swiss Household Panel (SHP). The Selects survey 2007 is a post-election survey that is based on a national representative sample and the SHP is a rich, representative, household based study which aims to observe social change in Switzerland since 1999. I start with a replication of the results of Bauer and Fatke (2014) and therefore datasets from 2007 are used. As is well-known Switzerland has a unique history of a rather frequent usage of direct democracy, and hence the country can serve as an ideal test case.

Political participation and "thick" democracy

In her seminal work *Participation and Democratic Theory* Pateman (1970) describes participatory democracy that stresses the educative value of political participation and contrasts it with liberal democracy that highlights mainly the instrumental value of political participation for participants. Pateman summarizes three functions of political participation. First, political participation has an educative function, second, it has an integrative function and third, it facilitates the acceptance of decisions. For participatory democrats the first and most important function is the educative function of political participation. Citizens who participate in political decision making are assumed to learn to take other interests than their own into account when engaging in participatory processes, they are expected to learn that public and private interests

are linked and they are stimulated to deliberate with each other. It is through participation that individuals are expected to acquire the qualities that are needed for the political system to work and hence it is through "participation in common seeing and common work", that the members of a "strong" democratic community are transformed into citizens (Barber 1984, p. 232). While Rousseau described the educative effects of political participation in the context of the city-state, John Stuart Mill described them in the scope of a modern political system and he extends Rousseau's description of the educative function of participation. As Pateman (1970) points out, for Mill, the local level of government plays a crucial role in "educating" the individual. In order to participate effectively in government, citizens need to develop the necessary qualities at the local level. Mill writes "a political act, to be done only once in a few years, and for which nothing in the daily habits of the citizen has prepared him, leaves his intellect and his moral dispositions very much as it found them" (cited in Pateman 1970, p. 30). Following this theory, citizens thus need a context in which they can practice their engagement in the decision making process. While the local level of politics appears a suitable context for Mill, Cole and Pateman stress the importance of participatory structures in the workplace or in fact, in all "lower level authority structures" (Pateman 1970, p. 35) as environments in which citizens can experience and practice to influence decision-making. According to this theory, we can expect, that individuals who are frequently engaged in the decision-making process, develop more positive, democratic characteristics, such as community-mindedness, political efficacy and satisfaction with political institutions and authorities, and are generally more supportive of the democratic system (Barber, 1984; Finkel, 1987; Pateman, 1970). However, what remains unclear is whether this theory can help us to understand potential consequences of direct democratic decision making. Can participation in direct democratic procedures fulfil the same role that participation at the local level or in the workplace is expected to?

Bowler and Donovan (2002) discuss this question explicitly. They argue that while direct democratic procedures may not have the same educative value as participation in the workplace, in comparison to the election of representatives, direct democratic procedures should have a greater effect on political efficacy. This reasoning is built on the argument that in contrast to the standard electoral context of representative democracy, citizens in democracies with direct democratic procedures must decide more often on collective issues and public policies. Through direct democratic decision making citizens get an "occasional voice in government" and the feeling that government is listening to them "or has to listen to them at some point" (Bowler and Donovan 2002, p. 376). But citizens might not only feel that government listens to them, they might also feel that they are being trusted, which is a crucial point according to Frey (1997, p. 1046), as their self-esteem is enhanced and their intrinsic motivation is "crowded in". Finally, compared to citizens in representative democracies, citizens in systems with direct democratic procedures might be characterized by more positive political attitudes and democratic orientations, because they are more satisfied with the democratic procedures (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001; Persson, Esaiasson, and Gilljam 2013; Smith and Tolbert 2004). Following these arguments, it can be assumed that the central claim of participatory democracy applies to systems with extensive direct democratic procedures and accordingly that citizens who live in those systems are characterized by more positive attitudes towards the political system.

Indeed, some studies find evidence for the "educative benefit" of direct democratic decision making. These analyses suggest that citizens who live in direct democracies are characterized by higher levels of external efficacy, i.e. they believe more strongly that the government is responsive to their demands (Bowler and Donovan 2002; Hero and Tolbert 2004; Mendelsohn and Cutler 2000; Smith and Tolbert 2004), have higher levels of political knowledge and interest (Mendelsohn and Cutler 2000; Smith 2002) and are more engaged in civic groups and associations (Smith and Tolbert 2004; Tolbert, McNeal, and Smith 2003).

However, not all empirical evidence confirms this direct positive relationship between direct democratic procedures and political attitudes and behavior. Gilens, Glaser, and Mendelberg (2001) cannot find a direct effect of propositions on political attitudes, however they show that it is the salience of propositions that seems to affect citizens' perception that they comprehend and have a say in political issues. The absence of a direct effect between direct democratic procedures and both internal and external efficacy is also ascertained by Schlozman and Yohai (2008) and by Dyck and Lascher (2009) who show that the effect of direct democracy on internal political efficacy depends on citizens' political knowledge.

A salient contrast between the studies that find a positive effect of direct democracy on political attitudes and those that find no effect is that scholars who find no effect distinguished between the institutional availability of direct democratic rights and the frequency of their actual use. This important distinction is not always clearly made in the literature and might explain the mixed evidence. It thus remains an open question whether citizens need to actually use direct democratic procedures to being more trusting and efficacious or whether the mere availability of these opportunities is sufficient in order to strengthen their trust in the political system, independent of whether they actually use these additional possibilities to voice their opinion.

The availability and use of direct democratic procedures

Several studies show that the effect of the availability of direct democratic procedures on political attitudes is different from the effect of actually using those procedures. Dyck (2009) finds that while the availability of initiatives in the United States does not affect trust in the state government, their usage affects trust negatively. This negative effect is confirmed in the study of trust in cantonal authorities in Switzerland (Bauer & Fatke, 2014). However, with respect to the availability of direct democratic rights, Bauer and Fatke (2014) find a positive

effect. Hence, the question arises whether we should expect different effects of availability and use of direct democratic procedures on political attitudes.

From the perspective of the theory of participatory democracy the results of Bauer and Fatke (2014) and Dyck (2009) are highly relevant as they seem to run counter to expectations. For adherents of this theory using direct democratic procedures should lead to positive effects, as it is the act of participation itself that is expected to build and nurture democratic orientations and political attitudes. In order to obtain this psychological effect, the classical writers advocated full participation. However, Pateman (1970, p. 73) remarks, that in this context a modification of the theory is required, because empirical evidence shows that "[…] even the mere feeling that participation is possible, even situations of pseudo-participation have beneficial effects on confidence, job satisfaction, etc.". One might thus argue that citizens might be more supportive if they have the feeling that they could participate, independent of whether they actually do so. The argument that government is responsive and considers them as trustworthy should be valid for citizens independent of their actual engagement. Moreover, citizens might be more satisfied with the decision-making process in a system with direct democratic procedures, no matter whether they participate themselves or not. In conclusion, the theory of participatory democracy does not seem to provide a theoretical foundation for the expectation of different effects of availability and usage of direct democratic procedures on political attitudes. The first hypothesis reads thus as follows:

H1. Citizens who live in systems that provide extensive direct democratic decision-making processes are characterized by higher levels of trust in political institutions and higher external political efficacy.

Consequently, it remains questionable how we can then explain the negative relation between using direct democratic rights and trust in canton and state level authorities that Bauer and Fatke

(2014) and Dyck (2009) found in their studies. Bauer and Fatke (2014) and Dyck (2009) give a number of reasons why this negative relationship was to be expected. If we start from the premise of liberal democracy instead of participatory democracy and assume that participation mainly serves to protect citizens' individual interests, direct democracy can be used as a sanctioning instrument. In line with this assumption citizens in states or cantons in which this instrument is frequently employed might get the impression that sanctioning is a necessity and that elected representatives are not to be trusted (Bauer & Fatke, 2014). This would be in line with the argument made by Rosanvallon (2008) that critical citizens should exert a rather strict oversight on the behaviour of political decision-making elites. Dyck (2009) argues that being constantly questioned and circumvented, initiatives might undermine the authority of elected officials, which might again lead to increasing distrust among the population. At the same time, Bauer and Fatke (2014, p. 54) point out that representatives who are constantly controlled "might no longer feel the same obligation to honour the trust of being voted into office", which might encourage them to "follow their own agenda" or to tweak contested legislation in the phase of implementation where citizens have less influence. Such behaviour might by implication enhance citizens' distrust and diminish their sense of political efficacy. While this reasoning suggests that direct democratic participation affects citizen's attitudes towards the political system, the argument that direct democratic processes are used as sanctioning mechanism rests on the reverse causal mechanism, as it implies that those citizens participate that are already dissatisfied with the performance of political institutions. Using an instrumental variable regression, Bauer and Fatke (2014) find evidence for the former causal mechanism. MacKenzie and Warren (2012) however, argue that participation might stem from a lack of trust. Following this reasoning, citizens might choose to use their direct democratic rights after evaluating how trustworthy their cantonal or state authorities are and how responsive they are to citizens' interest. This reasoning would be in line with Gamson (1968, p. 46-47) who stated

that “high trust in authorities implies some lack of necessity for influencing them”. Hence, one would expect that citizens will only use direct democracy if there is a necessity to influence policy-makers.

While both mechanisms seem plausible for the explanation of a negative relationship between trust in cantonal or state authorities – the dependent variables in the studies of Bauer and Fatke (2014) and Dyck (2009) – and engagement in direct democratic decision-making procedures, it remains unclear whether these explanations can also be applied to a broader notion of trust in political institutions and to external political efficacy. The argument that frequent usage of direct democratic procedures reduces political trust, as those procedures are used as sanctioning mechanisms seems to hold mainly in cases in which citizens are dissatisfied with the output and the performance of political authorities and institutions. The reasoning thus seems to hold mainly for trust in specific institutions and authorities and is therefore expected to depend mainly on the perceived output and performance of those institutions. In fact, the dependent variables in the above mentioned studies are, as Dyck (2009, p. 550) points out himself, “ […] strongly tied to incumbent evaluations.”

However, regarding the broader measure of trust in political institutions, the reasoning seems less straightforward. Trust in political institutions is an assessment of general political structures and procedures, and it tends to be more durable and independent of institutions’ performances and output in the short run. Only after a continuous experience of discontent over a long period of time general feelings of trust in political institutions might gradually erode (Easton, 1975; Hooghe, 2011). Therefore, I argue that while there are good reasons to assume that using direct democratic procedures is related to evaluations of democratic output and performance of specific political institutions it is far less clear why using direct democratic procedures should lead to an erosion of trust in political institutions more generally.

Also regarding external political efficacy, a negative relationship with using direct democratic rights can hardly be expected based on the theory. In fact, Hero and Tolbert (2004) argue that in citizens in states with frequent exposure to direct democracy should be more inclined to perceive government as more responsive. A negative effect on external efficacy would rather be expected to be the result of non-participation (Finkel 1987). I therefore argue that the negative effect of using direct democratic procedures that has been found in the study of trust in cantonal and state authorities does not hold in a study of trust in political institutions and external political efficacy, leading to the second hypothesis:

H2. The negative effect of using direct democratic procedures does not hold if we study trust in political institutions and external political efficacy.

I test those hypotheses using Swiss population data, but before the results are presented I will introduce the datasets, measures and method.

Data, Measures and Method

First of all the results of Bauer and Fatke (2014) are replicated. In a second step their models are extended to the study of trust in political institutions and political efficacy. I will therefore use the same data as they did which is the 2007 dataset from the Swiss Electoral Studies "Selects" that contains not only trust in cantonal authorities but also other items that allow us to create a comprehensive measure of trust in political institutions. As the Selects dataset does not contain any measure of political efficacy I use a different dataset for the analysis of political efficacy, namely the 2007 wave of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP). Both datasets are based on random probability samples from the Swiss population and for both data were collected in a similar period of time. This allows to include the same variables of interest, i.e. the availability and use of direct democratic instruments and thus to keep the analysis as comparable as possible to the original analysis of Bauer and Fatke (2014). However, as the SHP only contains one

question on the perception of system responsiveness, the analysis has to be restricted to external political efficacy.

Dependent variables

In comparison to the study of Bauer and Fatke (2014) I expand the analysis to support for the system as a whole and therefore I want to capture the level of trust in political institutions more broadly. As Easton explains (1975, p. 444) diffuse support "refers to evaluations of what an object is or represents – to the general meaning it has for a person – not of what it does". Therefore, if we start from Easton's concept of diffuse support, we need indicators for support that are independent of outputs and performances in the short run. Marien (2011) argues that the question that asks people how much they trust their country's parliament, government, political parties, legal system, the police, etc. does tap into a more encompassing form of political trust – although we cannot rule out that respondents think about how these institutions are functioning. According to Hooghe (2011, p. 270) the latent concept that is built on these items "can be conceptualized as a comprehensive evaluation of the political culture that is prevailing within a political system […]". Hence, instead of focusing on for example satisfaction with the functioning of an institution or authority, I have decided to measure trust in political institutions, based on the following items, that are included in the Selects 2007 survey: Trust in the federal council, trust in parliament, trust in national political parties, trust in local authorities, trust in justice/courts, trust in the police and the item that was use in the first step of the analysis trust in cantonal authorities. Under the assumption that this latent concept of trust in political institutions reflects the trustworthiness of the political system as a whole, it is expected that the different items on trust in actors and institutions load on one single latent variable. For each item respondents indicated their level of trust on an 11-point scale (0= "no trust"; 10= "full trust"). Based on these items I conducted a factor analysis and found, in line with previous research, that these items load one single factor (Marien, 2011; Zmerli,

Newton, & Montero, 2007) with an Eigenvalue of 3.214 and 46 per cent explained variance (Table 1). This measurement of trust in political institutions thus is one-dimensional and coherent. This finding hence confirms the argumentation of Hooghe (2001) that citizens do not distinguish between the functioning of various political institutions. Therefore, this factor was used as measurement of trust in political institutions.

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Trust in Political Institutions

Item	*Factor loading*
Trust in the federal council	0.720
Trust in parliament	0.744
Trust in national political parties	0.644
Trust in local authorities	0.624
Trust in cantonal authorities	0.749
Trust in justice/courts	0.646
Trust in the police	0.600
% explained variance	0.459
Eigenvalue	3.214

Note: Estimates are factor loadings from a principal factor analysis. *Source:* Selects 2007.

For the measurement of external political efficacy I relied on the question "How much influence do you think someone like you can have on government policy?" in the SHP 2007 personal questionnaire. Respondents could answer on an 11-point scale with 0 indicating "no influence" and 10 indicating "a very strong influence". Following Niemi, Craig, and Mattei (1991) this item primarily taps respondents' beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands, i.e. their sense of external political efficacy.

Independent variables

As I aim to build on the analysis of Bauer and Fatke (2014) I use the same measures as they did for the independent variables of interest, namely the availability of direct democratic rights and the usage of those rights. For the availability of those rights I thus rely on the same index that was created by Fischer (2009). This index represents a summary index of four sub-indices which capture the strength of four direct democratic institutions in 2003: the initiatives for constitutional and statutory changes, the fiscal referendum on expenditure projects and the referendum for laws. Each sub-index ranges from one to six and reflects the evaluation of requirements for those four institutions more specifically the signature requirements that are needed for optional referendums and the fiscal thresholds for fiscal referendums. Therefore each sub-index measures the availability and the imposed hurdles for each of the four direct democratic procedures in the Swiss cantons.

Regarding the actual usage of these direct democratic instruments, I use the average number of cantonal initiatives and optional referendums per year between 2002 and 2006 that has been generated by Bauer and Fatke (2014) based on data from the year book "*Année politique Suisse*" that is generally considered to offer a comprehensive account of political events in Switzerland.

Control variables

I furthermore control for variables that could affect trust in political institutions and political efficacy on the individual as well as on the cantonal level. Again, since I am interested in an analysis that is as close as possible to the one presented by Bauer and Fatke (2014), I also include exactly the same control variables. For the analysis of trust in political institutions this is gender, age, the level of education and the perception of the economic development. Also I include a dummy variable for Catholic denomination and unemployment status. Thanks to their detailed documentation of data sources, I could also include the same canton-level control

variables, namely the financial state of cantons in 2006 and the primary national income per capita in 2005.

For the analysis of external political efficacy I include the same control variables, expect for religious denomination and the perception of economic development. I excluded religious denomination, because in the literature I found no reason to assume that religious denomination should affect the sense of external efficacy. Economic evaluations, on the other hand, are expected to affect general political attitudes (Bowler & Donovan, 2002), however, the item that was used in the Selects survey is not included in the SHP. Instead, I included a variable that measures the respondent's evaluation of his or her standard of living in the past year. Respondents could answer on a scale from 0 ("greatly worsened") to 10 ("greatly improved").

In both, the analysis of trust in political institutions and the analysis of external political efficacy I dropped the canton Nidwalden, because the Selects survey 2007 does not contain data for this canton. I therefore have 3,858 respondents for the analysis of trust in political institutions and 4,094 respondents for the analysis of external political efficacy. In both analyses those respondents are nested in cantons, which is why I rely on varying intercept models.

Results

In the first step, I replicate the analysis of trust in cantonal authorities of Bauer and Fatke (2014) (their Table 2). Unsurprisingly, using the same data I find virtually the same results (see Appendix, Table A). As the final model, which contains all the control variables and both variables of interest shows, the availability of direct democratic rights affects trust in cantonal authorities positively while their actual use has a significant, negative effect. So this first step just confirms the conclusion of Bauer and Fatke.

In the second step, I replicate the exact same analysis but this time I replace the dependent variable with the variable that captures trust in political institutions (Table 2). The first remarkable observation is that there is considerably less variance in trust in political institutions on the second level compared to the variance in trust in cantonal authorities. Our replication of the intercept-only model of trust in cantonal authorities revealed that about 6 per cent of the entire variance is found on the second level. For the intercept-only model of trust in political institutions, this is only 2.3 per cent. This confirms the assumption that trust in cantonal authorities captures evaluations of the performance of specific institutions apparently which vary quite substantially across the 25 cantons. The broader attitude of trust in political institutions, on the other hand, captures an attitude that varies primarily between individuals independent of where they live. Hence, when attempting to explain the variance in trust in political institutions, we have to focus mainly on individual characteristics which is why this observation already challenges the first hypothesis claiming that those citizens are characterized by higher levels of trust in political institutions and external efficacy that live in cantons which provide more extensive direct democratic decision-making processes. The effects of those individual-level variables, however, are similar compared to the effects in the analysis of trust in cantonal authorities. While sex does not seem to matter, trust in political institutions seems to rise with age and the level of education. *Ceteris paribus*, Catholics seem to have higher levels of trust in political institutions and unemployment comes along with lower levels of trust in political institutions. Also, citizens who believe that the state of the economy has worsened are significantly less trustful. Looking at the second-level control variables it shows that a canton's financial state and national income do not affect individuals' level of trust in political institutions.

Finally, I turn to our variables of interest. The first model reveals that the availability of direct democratic rights does affect levels of trust in political institutions positively, which seems in

line with what the theory of participatory democracy would predict. However, if we turn to the second model, we find that, just as in the analysis of trust in cantonal authorities, the use of direct democratic instruments has a significant, negative effect on trust in political institutions, which is in sharp contrast to what we had expected.

Table 2: Random-intercept models of direct democracy and trust in political institutions

	Trust in political institutions					
	I		II		III	
Age	0.002**	(0.001)	0.002**	(0.001)	0.002**	(0.001)
Sex	0.036	(0.030)	0.036	(0.030)	0.036	(0.030)
Education	0.022***	(0.004)	0.023***	(0.004)	0.022***	(0.004)
Catholic (Dummy)	0.122***	(0.032)	0.123***	(0.032)	0.121***	(0.032)
Economy worse (Dummy)	-0.281***	(0.052)	-0.284***	(0.052)	-0.281***	(0.052)
Unemployed (Dummy)	-0.233*	(0.126)	-0.235*	(0.126)	-0.233*	(0.126)
Availability of direct democratic rights	0.051**	(0.026)			0.036	(0.031)
Actual use of direct democratic instruments			-0.047*	(0.025)	-0.027	(0.031)
Financial state	-0.001	(0.026)	-0.000	(0.026)	-0.002	(0.026)
National income	0.144	(0.516)	0.818	(0.555)	0.463	(0.627)
Constant	-0.568**	(0.228)	-0.595**	(0.232)	-0.604***	(0.228)
Observations	3,858		3,858		3,858	
Number of groups	25		25		25	
-2 * loglikelihood	10,165		10,166		10,164	
ICC in %	0.016		0.016		0.015	

Note: The dependent variable is trust in political institutions. Standard errors in parentheses. Sign.:*** p<0.01, ** p <0.05, * p<0.1
Source: Selects 2007.

Yet, both effects disappear when we include them together in one model (Model III) and at this point, the conclusions differ strongly from the conclusions resulting from the analysis of trust in cantonal authorities. Neither the availability nor the use of direct democratic procedures seems to affect trust in political institutions. On the one hand, this result contradicts the first hypothesis. On the other hand, the negative effect of using direct democratic instruments disappears and this supports the second hypothesis. So, while using direct democratic measures

apparently cannot enhance trust in political institutions, the good news for advocates of participatory democracy is at least that it does not seem to deteriorate it either.

In a final step we turn to the analysis of external political efficacy (Table 3.). This variable varies even less across cantons than trust in political institutions. Only about 2 per cent of the variance in the intercept-only model is detected at the second level. Concerning the individual level variables, we find different effects than for trust in political institutions. While older people seem to have more trust in political institutions than younger citizens, a sense of external political efficacy seems to diminish with age. Citizens with a higher level of education appear to have not only more trust in political institutions but also more external political efficacy and also citizens who feel that their standard of living has improved have a stronger sense of external political efficacy.

Table 3: Random-intercept models of direct democracy and external political efficacy

	External Political Efficacy					
	I		II		III	
Age	-0.015***	(0.003)	-0.015***	(0.003)	-0.015***	(0.003)
Sex	-0.053	(0.086)	-0.052	(0.086)	-0.053	(0.086)
Education	0.095***	(0.015)	0.094***	(0.015)	0.095***	(0.015)
Living standard improved	0.158***	(0.035)	0.158***	(0.035)	0.157***	(0.035)
Unemployed (Dummy)	0.434	(0.370)	0.437	(0.370)	0.436	(0.370)
Availability of direct democratic rights	0.192***	(0.054)			0.181***	(0.061)
Actual use of direct democratic instruments			-0.113	(0.070)	-0.025	(0.068)
Financial state	0.079	(0.065)	0.085	(0.076)	0.074	(0.065)
National income	0.974	(1.187)	3.323**	(1.506)	1.358	(1.523)
Constant	1.724***	(0.592)	1.572**	(0.690)	1.666***	(0.606)
Observations	4,094				4,094	
Number of groups	25				25	
-2 * loglikelihood	19,331				19,339	
ICC in %	0.004				0.009	

Note: The dependent variable is external political efficacy. Standard errors in parentheses. Sign.:*** p<0.01, ** p <0.05, * p<0.1
Source: Swiss Household Panel (SHP).

Tuning to the variables of interest we find that the availability of direct democratic rights has a positive effect on external efficacy (Model I) and this effect also holds when we include the use of direct democratic instruments into the same model (Model III). Using direct democratic instruments, however does not affect external efficacy, neither in the second nor in the final model (Model III). Apparently, citizens have a stronger feeling that government is responsive to their demands and interests in cantons in which direct democratic instruments are extensively available and hurdles to use them are low. And this effect remains observable independent of how often those instruments are actually used.

Discussion and Conclusion

Summarizing the results, we can state that there is only limited evidence for the first hypothesis which claimed that the availability and the use of direct democratic procedures has a positive effect on political attitudes that tap support for the political system. While we could not find any effect for the analysis of trust in political institutions, levels of external efficacy are significantly higher in cantons which are characterized by an extensive availability of direct democratic procedures. However, it has to be remarked that there is generally a lot less variance of both, trust in political institutions as well as external political efficacy across the 25 cantons compared to the variance that is found for trust in cantonal authorities. So while evaluations of cantonal authorities depend to a substantial degree on the canton in which respondents live, levels of general trust in political institutions and feelings of external efficacy are hardly dependent on the administrative division in which one lives. I interpret this finding as evidence for the claim that trust in authorities captures evaluations of performances of specific institutions rather than trust in political institutions as such.

Concerning the second hypothesis, we did find evidence to support the claim that while there are good reasons to argue that using direct democratic instruments affects trust in cantonal authorities negatively, such a negative effect is unexpected in the study of trust in political institutions more generally. In fact, using direct democratic instruments seems to affect neither trust in political institutions nor external political efficacy. If direct democratic instruments are used as sanctioning mechanism for negatively perceived performances and outputs of authorities this can explain the negative effect on evaluations of cantonal authorities and institutions, however, there is little reason to assume that broader attitudes of support for the system are also affected.

I believe that this study can contribute to a better understanding of the mixed evidence that was found in previous studies concerning the link between direct democratic procedures and political attitudes. In this regard, two aspects should be considered. First, in some studies a difference is made between availability of direct democratic rights and the use of direct democratic instruments and because results differ quite substantively this study confirms the importance of this distinction. Second, different measures of trust in political institutions have been employed in those studies and different theories have been applied to explain the results. This study underlines the importance to clearly distinguish between the different measures. Participatory democracy can primarily serve to understand the long-term effects of extensive participation in different areas of life on support for the political system. Liberal democracy, on the other hand, that stresses the protective function of participation might help to explain evaluations of political outputs and performances of specific authorities and institutions.

But what do these results tell us about the applicability of the theory of participatory democracy to direct democratic procedures? While the findings of Bauer and Fatke (2014) and Dyck (2009) seem inexplicable from the perspective of participatory democracy, as they suggest that using more opportunities for direct participation "initiates distrust", our analysis can qualify these

findings to some degree. While an increase in using direct democratic measures might diminish trust in authorities on the state or canton level, it does not affect the general feeling of support for the political system. So in the end it is not too bad of a result for adherents of this theory. However these results can be interpreted in two ways.

On the one hand, they show that providing citizens with more direct democratic instruments appears to affect their trust in cantonal authorities positively as well as their sense of external efficacy - and this independent of how much those instruments are used. Apparently, having the option of interfering is already sufficient to strengthen citizens' trust in cantonal authorities and their sense of government responsiveness. A potential reason would be that citizens are satisfied with the democratic process itself, independent of whether they use it. This interpretation would be in line with the claim of Dalton and Welzel (2014) that new generations of "assertive citizens" are characterized by a strong appreciation of input-oriented notions of democracy. Hence, if direct participation can lead to more critical citizens, that are however supportive of the system as such, some scholars might argue that from a democratic perspective, this represents a desirable situation (Dalton & Welzel, 2014; Rosanvallon, 2008).

On the other hand, support for the first hypothesis that links direct democratic participation with political support remains limited, which might call the general applicability of the theory of participatory democracy for direct democratic systems into question. As we have seen for both, trust in political institutions as well as political efficacy, by far, most of the variance is found on the individual level and can therefore not be explained by the variance in the extent of direct democratic decision making. One reason could be that in comparison to other countries, Swiss cantons all provide relatively extensive opportunities of participation in decision-making processes and that the variance within Switzerland is therefore too limited. Another, even more fundamental reason could be that participatory democrats seem to envision an entirely different society with multiple participation possibilities in the workplace, during free time activities and

at all levels of the political system. Moreover, as Schlozman and Yohai (2008, p. 472) point out these theorists stress the importance of deliberation and the benefits of deliberation cannot arise in plebiscites "where voters do not deliberate or where their interest clash". So scholars should be careful when applying the theory of participatory democracy to direct democratic systems and not blindly base their assumptions on a theory that envisions an entire reconfiguration of todays' political, economic and societal institutions.

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Appendix

Table A: Random-intercept models of direct democracy and external trust in cantonal authorities

	Trust in cantonal authorities					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Age	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***	0.007***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Sex	0.053	0.055	0.053	0.055	0.053	0.054
	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)	(0.061)
Education	0.027***	0.028***	0.028***	0.028***	0.028***	0.028***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Catholic (Dummy)	0.196***	0.197***	0.188***	0.200***	0.199***	0.198***
	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.067)	(0.067)
Economy worse (Dummy)	-	-	-	-	-	-
	0.456***	0.445***	0.457***	0.444***	0.452***	0.445***
	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.103)	(0.103)
Unemployed (Dummy)	-0.350	-0.344	-0.349	-0.344	-0.350	-0.345
	(0.263)	(0.263)	(0.263)	(0.263)	(0.263)	(0.263)
Availability of direct		0.282***		0.275***		0.198**
democratic rights		(0.067)		(0.070)		(0.080)
Actual use of direct			-0.151**		-	-0.134*
					0.243***	
democratic instruments			(0.075)		(0.073)	(0.079)
Financial state				0.015	0.021	0.012
				(0.072)	(0.076)	(0.068)
National income				0.356	3.914**	1.966
				(1.383)	(1.567)	(1.618)
Constant	6.013***	4.846***	6.221***	4.644***	4.519***	4.451***
	(0.187)	(0.329)	(0.210)	(0.605)	(0.649)	(0.587)
Observations	4,225	4,225	4,225	4,225	4,225	4,225
Number of groups	25	25	25	25	25	25
-2 * loglikelihood	17,646	17,634	17,642	17,633	17,636	17,630
ICC in %	0.055	0.030	0.046	0.029	0.033	0.026

Note: The dependent variable is trust in cantonal authorities. Standard errors in parentheses. Sign.:*** p<0.01, ** p <0.05, * p<0.1